



Ten Strategies for Establishing a School Health Program Framework to Support Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Tobacco Use Prevention

CDC has developed guidelines for school programs on promoting physical activity, healthy eating, and a tobacco-free lifestyle among young people. These guidelines are based on rigorous reviews of the scientific literature and expert opinion, and include many recommendations for action. To help make the recommendations more manageable, CDC has identified ten key approaches, derived from the guidelines, for schools to adopt in addressing these behaviors. Following is a list of those approaches, along with sample action steps that schools can implement in support of the ten strategies.

1) **Self-Assessment:** Assess the school's health programs and plan for improvement.

- Assemble a team of staff, students, parents, and community members to conduct an annual assessment of the school's health policies and programs, using the CDC's School Health Index or a similar tool.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school's health policies and programs.
- Work with staff, students, parents, and the community to develop and implement an action plan for improving school health policies and programs.
- Communicate results to the school community and monitor implementation of the action plan.
- Reassess policies and programs once a year.

2) **Policy Review:** Review and improve the school's health policies.

- Assemble a team of staff, students, parents, and community members to examine the school's health policies, using *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide* as a reference.
- As needed, select certain policy areas to target for improvement and, with input from all key school constituencies, develop new or improved policies.
- Communicate the importance of the new policies to the entire school community and orient staff to policies that relate to their job responsibilities.
- Create and implement a plan for monitoring and enforcing compliance.
- Re-examine policies, using *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: A School Health Policy Guide* annually.

3) **Health Education:** Use evidence-based, age-appropriate, health education curricula.

- Hire certified health education teachers to teach all health education classes.
- Require all who teach health education to participate in professional development/continuing education in health education at least once a year.
- Provide an adequate amount of instructional time for health education.
- Whenever possible, consult lists published by credible organizations and review evaluations of curricula being considered for adoption; examine whether the curricula have research-based evidence of effectiveness in improving and maintaining health behaviors, especially in the areas of physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco-use prevention.
- Use a sequential health education curriculum that is consistent with state and/or national standards for health education.
- When choosing or developing a curriculum, assess the extent to which it includes characteristics of curricula that have been identified as critical for improving health behaviors, such as teaching the skills needed to adopt healthy behaviors and giving students ample opportunities to practice these skills, identifying societal pressures that influence behavior and ways to resist, and featuring culturally appropriate examples and activities that are inclusive of the community's ethnic cultures.

4) School Health Coordinator and Council: Designate a School Health Coordinator and establish an active School Health Council.

- Hire or designate a School Health Coordinator with leadership skills and abilities to build organizational capacity for school health programs, coordinate multiple components, establish a viable school health council, strengthen the quality and quantity of health education instruction, and use multiple strategies to identify and assess program progress and success.
- Ensure that the council oversees the school's health policies and programs and are involved in assessing, developing, and improving the policies and programs.
- Ensure that the council contains a wide variety of members including representatives of all components of the Coordinated School Health Program, teachers, administrators, other school staff, students, parents, and community members.
- Ensure that the council has an effective relationship and regular communication with the school's parent/teacher organization, school administration, and school board.

5) Staff Wellness Program: Implement a quality wellness program for school staff.

- Provide staff access to a physical health screening at least once a year, as well as physical activity/fitness and healthy eating/weight management programs that are accessible and free or low-cost.
- Offer or refer staff to accessible tobacco-use cessation services at the school or in the community.
- Promote and encourage staff participation in school wellness program activities that improve their health behaviors so staff can provide positive personal examples that reinforce positive student health behaviors.
- Appoint a full- or part-time staff wellness coordinator/advisor.

6) Physical Education: Implement a quality physical education program.

- Hire certified physical education teachers to teach all physical education classes.
- Require all who teach physical education to participate in professional development/continuing education in physical education at least once a year.
- Provide an adequate amount of time for physical education classes (at least 150 minutes per week for elementary school students and at least 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students for the entire school year).
- Ensure that physical education classes have a teacher/student ratio comparable to that of other classes.
- Use a sequential physical education curriculum that is consistent with state and/or national standards for physical education with a focus on students' development of motor skills, movement forms, and health-related fitness.
- Conduct physical education classes so that all students are moderately to vigorously active at least 50% of the time.
- Ensure that all students, including those who are not athletically gifted, are engaged in meaningful and enjoyable physical activity.
- Prohibit the use of physical activity as punishment and withholding of physical education class as punishment or as time to complete classroom assignments.

7) Opportunities for Physical Activity: Increase opportunities for physical activity in addition to physical education and interscholastic sports.

- Provide daily recess periods of at least 20 minutes for all elementary school students.
- Provide daily physical activity breaks in the classroom setting.
- Offer after-school intramural programs and/or physical activity clubs that meet the needs and interests of all students, including those who are not athletically gifted and those with special health care needs.
- Encourage community access and use of the school's physical activity facilities outside of school hours.
- Encourage parents and community members to institute a walk-to-school program, using CDC's Kids Walk-to-School manual or other similar tools.
- Encourage after-school child care programs to provide developmentally-appropriate physical activity for participating children and to limit the time spent watching television or videos and using computers.

8) School Meals: Implement a quality school meals program.

- Hire a school food service manager who has a nutrition-related baccalaureate or graduate degree and certification/credentialing in food service from either the state or the American School Food Service Association.
- Offer nutritious breakfast and lunch meals that meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's School Meal Nutrition Standards and are appealing and fully accessible to all students.
- Promote and advertise cafeteria selections low in fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Provide free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch for qualified students.
- Meet the nutritional needs of students with special health care needs.
- Provide students with at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch, counting from the time they are seated.
- Maintain a safe, clean, and pleasant cafeteria.
- Require the food service manager to participate in professional development/continuing education on meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and/or on nutrition education to promote healthy eating choices at least once a year.

9) Nutrition Environment: Establish a healthy school nutrition environment (i.e., healthier food choices outside of school meals).

- Make appealing foods available that are low in fat, sodium, and added sugars (e.g., low-fat fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products) wherever food is served inside and outside of the cafeteria.
- Prohibit the sale and distribution of foods of minimal nutritional value and other foods of low nutritive value throughout the school grounds until after the end of the last lunch period.
- If the school offers a la carte items in the food service area, include at least one appealing, low-fat choice from each of the following food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products.
- Engage in fund-raising efforts that support healthy eating through the sale of non-food items or foods that are low in fat, sodium, and added sugars instead of foods that are high in fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Prohibit giving students low nutritive food as a reward and withholding food as punishment.

10) Tobacco-Free Environment: Establish a tobacco-free school.

- Adopt a tobacco-free school policy that prohibits the use of tobacco by students, staff, and visitors, at all times, on all school property, in any form of school transportation, and at school-sponsored events on or off school property. Communicate the policy to students, staff, and visitors frequently through a variety of methods.
- Develop and record school-specific procedures for enforcement of the policy and identify those responsible for its enforcement. These procedures should emphasize support over punishment and be applied consistently everyone.
- Prohibit advertising and display of tobacco-industry brand names and logos on school property, at school functions, in school publications, and on student and staff clothing and gear.
- Communicate policies on tobacco use to students, staff, parents, and visitors through a variety of methods.
- Offer or refer students to school- or community-based tobacco-use cessation services designed for youth.